



**TOWN OF WESTFORD  
ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE**

TOWN HALL  
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**Meeting Minutes  
Economic Development Committee**

Tuesday, September 25, 2012 at 8:15 AM  
Town Hall, Main Conference Room, 2nd Floor  
55 Main Street, Westford

**Attending:** Tom Barry, Ron Caterino, Eli Demetri, Peter Dervan, Bill Nussbaum, Andrew Stern, Amanda Wilson, Jodi Ross (present beginning at 8:30 AM).

**Remotely Participating:** None.

Meeting was called to order by Tom Barry at 8:15 AM.

It was motioned and seconded that the Committee approve the Meeting Agenda. The motion was approved unanimously.

It was motioned and seconded that the Committee approve the Draft Minutes of the September 11, 2012 meeting. The motion was approved unanimously.

**FIRST CLASS ACCESS:**

- The Town IT group has confirmed that all Committee members now have access to the First Class email system.

**EDC WEB SITE:**

- Angus Jennings established a website for the EDC and IT can pass administrative duties on to a member of the committee after short training. Pete Dervan volunteered to take on administrative duties for the EDC website and will schedule training with the IT department.

**EDC BUSINESS CARDS:**

- Tom Barry created an EDC business card template with his daughter.
- The fax number on the cards will be the fax number of Angus Jennings.
- A list was passed around to members present for members to write name and phone number to be written on cards.
- Those not present will have to get this information to Tom Barry.
- Expense of cards will be submitted to Angus Jennings.
- Cards should be available at next meeting.

### **SMALL BUSINESS PERMITTING GUIDE (1):**

- This agenda item was pushed to later in the meeting when Jodi Ross is present. Update is moved to later in the meeting.

### **BUSINESS RESOURCE CENTER AT THE BUSINESS EXPO AND SHOWCASE:**

The Expo is occurring at the Raddison in Chelmsford Thursday, September 27, 2012 from 12:00 PM - 5:00 PM.

Tom Barry contacted WCAT - the Expo and Westford's participation in the Expo will be publicized on WCAT.

The Greater Lowell Chamber of Commerce has been informed that Westford is attending and would like a booth.

Angus Jennings, Chris Kluchman and Jodi Ross will represent Westford at the Westford table.

Tom Barry, Ron Caterino, Bill Nussbaum and Eli Demetri will attend the Expo to survey the attendees, browse the various booths and review any materials which might be relevant to the work of the EDC, as well as represent Westford at the Westford table.

### **TECH REVIEW COMMITTEE:**

The Westford Tech Review group will meet Thursday, September 27 at 10:00 AM in Room 201 of Westford Town Hall.

Tom Barry and Bill Nussbaum, Ron Caterino, and Eli Demetri will attend.

Bill Nussbaum presented a section to be added to the Small Business Permitting Guide encouraging potential business/applicants to attend a meeting of the Tech Review group to gain an overview of the various permits a business must acquire/consider.

Nashoba Tech will attend the meeting on Thursday.

(Jodi Ross arrived at 8:30 AM).

Business cards were shown to Jodi Ross who approved them. The receipt for the expense associated with the cards will be given to Angus Jennings.

Jodi Ross relayed that Andrea Peraner-Sweet could not attend and sends her regrets.

### **SMALL BUSINESS PERMITTING GUIDE (2):**

Bill Nussbaum stated that there are two issues to resolve with the small business permitting guide before release.

1. It needs a welcome letter from the Town Manager which we can base on letters in guides from neighboring towns. Tom Barry will email a copy of the permitting guide draft to Jodi Ross and Jodi will draft a letter.
2. The permitting guide needs a section which references the Tech Review group and directs applicants/businesses to that Committee.

Bill Nussbaum read a draft of said section.

Jodi Ross noted that the Tech Review group should not be referred to as a 'Committee' as that body was not created by the Board of Selectmen.



It was suggested that the body be referred to as the "Westford Technical Review Group" and Committee members concurred.

Jodi will take Bill Nussbaum's section regarding the Tech Review Group to that body for their approval.

#### **TECH REVIEW GROUP:**

- The purpose of the Tech Review Group was then discussed. It was initially believed that the Tech Review Group was formed to provide applicants with access to Department heads and a quick overview of the permitting process. Department heads could also assess whether the business is a good fit for the town.
- The Tech Review Group also deals with other issues, however. An applicant would likely attend the portion of the Group meeting relevant to their own interests and be free to leave after those matters were attended to.
- It was noted that the Tech Review Group is not a policy making body and so should not overstep its authority by making economic development policy decisions. The Tech Review Group should be purely informative for potential businesses. Jodi Ross will clarify the role of the Group with Angus Jennings.
- Eli Demetri has created a questionnaire and indication of general interest for potential businesses which will be included as Appendix C in the Permitting Guide.
- Those working on the Permitting Guide are targeting a mid-October release date. Angus Jennings will coordinate this release with the IT department.

#### **BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT PLAN:**

- Members of the Committee noted that the Committee should develop its own goals and clarify what types of businesses would be good to attract to Westford as this would focus the Committee.
- It was mentioned that a higher end hotel and restaurants would be desirable to cater to business travelers that frequent the local tech companies.
- More tech companies may also be desirable. Big box retailers and car dealerships are not desirable.
- The Town is seeking 'non-obtrusive' businesses that will provide jobs.
- Any vision or plan that the Committee does develop should be reported to the Board of Selectmen for their approval and direction.
- We would also need to consider any impact on infrastructure new businesses may bring (e.g. housing, transportation, traffic congestion).
- The Committee noted that it may also want to focus on bringing smaller businesses to the villages of Westford though zoning might be an issue with such a mission.
- 12 North Main Street is a property the Committee should potentially focus on as well.
- It was mentioned that we need to develop a vision for the Town before we can list priorities and projects for achieving that vision.
- The Committee may also want to entice sustainable and Green businesses.
- It was mentioned that the Board of Selectman can also come to the Committee with a direction for the Committee to take. The town Master Plan may also provide some direction.

#### **ETAs, ITC, TIF:**

- The benefits of being designated an Economic Target Area by the MOBD was discussed noting that such a designation would allow the town to offer certain tax benefits to new businesses.
- It is unclear whether Westford could qualify as an Economic Target Area on its own, but it may be able to join the Economic Target Area of another region as municipalities can file for joint designation to the MOBD.
- Littleton and Chelmsford are both Economic Target Areas. It is unclear whether those communities would have to refile with the MOBD to expand Westford into their Economic Target Areas.
- The Committee would need to decide where to expand an Economic Target Area - either expanding from the Littleton border or expanding from the Chelmsford border.
- It appears the only drawback to pursuing an Economic Target Area designation for Westford is the labor that will go into pursuing that designation.
- It was noted that Red Hat got tax advantages by being designated an exceptional circumstance by the MOBD and other businesses may be able to garner that same designation.
- It was reiterated that the Board of Selectmen does not have interest in expanding outside the route 110 corridor or bringing smaller businesses to the villages.
- The next step is to contact the MOBD for more information.

#### **VILLAGES:**

- Members of the Committee are working on getting a map overlay combining zoning and land use maps.

#### **THE BUSINESS MAILING DATABASE:**

- The compilation of this database is in progress.

#### **WESTFORD CHAMBER OF COMMERCE/BUSINESS ASSOCIATION:**

- Several members reviewed local chambers of commerce and/or business associations.
- The Middlesex West Chamber of Commerce is based in Acton and covers eight communities, Westford being one. This chamber has approximately 300 members of which 36 are from Westford.
- The Middlesex West Chamber targets particular businesses and offers multiple regular programs to members.
- The Merrimack Valley Chamber of Commerce is based in Lawrence and serves Lawrence, Andover, North Andover and Methuen. This chamber has about 1100 members.
- The Lowell Chamber of Commerce has 629 members, three of which are from Westford. It was noted that Lowell Chamber of Commerce meetings are usually heavily attended.
- It was noted that the Nashoba Valley Chamber of Commerce has 656 members, seven of which are from Westford. This chamber covers 16 towns.
- The Chelmsford Business Association is a localized business group that has a liaison to other local chambers.
- The Chelmsford Business Association provides local cable access TV programming to promote businesses in town.